



YoungStar Five Year Plan

Submitted to

Wisconsin's Joint Committee on Finance

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 23, 2010, the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC) approved YoungStar, Wisconsin's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), to give Wisconsin's nearly 8,500 child care providers the tools they need to improve the quality of child care, and parents, for the first time, will be able to identify and select quality care for their children. YoungStar creates incentives for child care programs to improve services to the 53,000 low-income children who participate in the Wisconsin Shares program. In addition, it links quality directly to Wisconsin Shares payments and provides a mechanism to further prevent fraud in the Wisconsin Shares program.

When passing YoungStar, JFC required the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to create a five year plan for YoungStar with the following elements: (a) a description of YoungStar based on the actual data collected from immediate training and technical assistance; (b) a mechanism to direct intense training and technical assistance where needed; (c) tiered reimbursements to providers; (d) before- and after-school programs; (e) anticipated revenues and expenditures; (f) a method for evaluation with timeline; (g) an appeals process; (h) a review of all possible funding sources for YoungStar; and (i) a process for a child care provider to submit new information for consideration before a rating for that provider is posted.

The JFC also directed the Department to communicate directly with parents and consider child care-related experience and continuing education requirements when creating the five year plan. The JFC required the Department to specify how child care providers that do not currently serve children in Wisconsin Shares can participate in YoungStar and to include a requirement in YoungStar that child care providers that participate in YoungStar cannot deny care for children who participate in Wisconsin Shares.

Finally, the plan must describe how DCF would work with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to conduct a longitudinal study that directly links individual child outcomes in YoungStar to long-term school readiness.

To achieve quality in child care, the Department revamped the system and rebuilt the foundation of early care and education in Wisconsin. We must ensure parents are confident about the quality of care their child receives while they are working to support their families; that fraudulent providers are being identified and investigated; that good providers are being recognized and rewarded; and that we invest in improving the quality of all child care in Wisconsin. To do this we:

- Streamlined administration of Wisconsin Shares by: DCF taking over all child care functions in Milwaukee County; improving customer service; placing a greater emphasis on reducing fraud; realizing greater operational efficiencies; and enhancing community partnerships. This work is expected to reduce overpayments due to fraud and errors in Wisconsin Shares.
- Detected and investigated allegations of Wisconsin Shares fraud: Through the creation of a Fraud Detection and Investigation Unit, we embarked on an aggressive initiative to eliminate fraud within the Wisconsin Shares program. Thus far, our actions have resulted in over 200 providers being suspended from the Wisconsin

Shares program and a savings of \$120 million in taxpayer funds. Our work has resulted in 15 criminal charges being brought against those who were defrauding the system.

- Ensured licensing visits are timely and efficient: Last year, our licensors conducted more than 10,000 licensing visits across the state to ensure that children were in safe and healthy child care environments. We have significantly reduced the number of overdue licensing visits from 172 a year ago, to only four today. In southeastern Wisconsin, we launched a Quality Improvement Unit which is a specialized unit that focuses on child care centers where we have the highest number of concerns.

All of these steps have improved the foundation of child care in Wisconsin and prepared us to take the next step: improving the quality of child care in Wisconsin.

Child care quality and outcomes for children have improved substantially in states that have implemented Quality Rating and Improvement Systems. For example, when Oklahoma's *Reaching for the Stars* QRIS was implemented in 2003, less than 46% of children who received child care subsidies similar to Wisconsin Shares were receiving child care in a higher quality center. After two years, that percentage moved up significantly to over 76% receiving child care in a high quality center. Additionally, we know that when QRIS programs are implemented correctly, they are valid and reliable sources of information for parents who are choosing care for their children.*

The YoungStar five year plan incorporates the ideas of providers, advocates, experts in the field, and families to create a system that can help families find quality care for their children and help providers meet the demands of these families through training, technical assistance, micro-grants and quality incentive payments.

On November 1, the Department signed a contract to administer YoungStar in each of the six regions of the state. That vendor, called "The Consortium," is made up of three organizations: Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA), Celebrate Children Foundation (CCF) and Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) (hereafter referred to as "The Consortium"). The Department has confidence that YoungStar will be delivered in a thorough and culturally competent manner by The Consortium.

The Consortium, with oversight from the Department, will be responsible for: (a) delivering training and technical assistance in all six YoungStar regions; (b) rating, observing and collecting data for child care providers; (c) administering micro-grants to providers for improvements; (d) acting as a resource for providers to contact with questions about YoungStar; and (e) facilitating partnerships and investment in early care and education by private funders.

All providers that serve children who receive Wisconsin Shares subsidies will be required to participate in YoungStar, sign a Wisconsin Shares Contract and will be rated. Additionally, all providers who wish to participate in YoungStar must agree to accept children who receive Wisconsin Shares by signing a Wisconsin Shares Contract.

Beginning in late December, parents in Wisconsin will be able to use the YoungStar website to find information about the quality of child care providers in their community. Providers will

* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/qrs-impactqualitycc.html>. Accessed 1 November 2010.

be rated in four categories: educational qualifications; learning environment and curriculum; professional practices; and health and well-being.

Communication with parents and providers is a key aspect of YoungStar, as the Department wants to ensure that correct and the most up-to-date information is available to parents and providers. To facilitate high-quality communication, DCF will contract with a communications vendor to develop and implement a marketing and outreach strategy. Beginning in December 2010, the vendor will ensure special attention is paid to disseminating information to parents and providers in all areas of the state with a focus on rural and low-income urban areas.

The estimated revenues and expenditures are a projection of movement of providers moving between star levels over the next five years. Providers will earn higher star level ratings as they attain more training and technical assistance through YoungStar. Due to the Department's work to rebuild the foundation of child care by improving safety and reducing fraud, over \$120 million in savings is projected in the Wisconsin Shares program. As a result of this savings, YoungStar will not require any additional funding beyond what has already been budgeted.

To ensure the effectiveness of YoungStar, researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and DCF staff will perform evaluations on the program to measure impacts of YoungStar, retention rates, provider and parent feedback, among other items.

With YoungStar, Wisconsin parents will be able to make more informed child care choices, providers will increase the quality of care they provide, and the children in their care will be better prepared for school, work and life.

RATING QUALITY

Quality Rating

The QRIS model approved by the Joint Finance Committee is a hybrid point system. It is based on a 2005 proposal developed by Governor Doyle's public/private KidsFirst: Quality Counts for Kids Task Force, and the building block model contained in the Governor's 2009-11 biennial budget. It has been enhanced to reflect feedback from the child care community. Significant effort went into the development of the current YoungStar model:

- ♦ The KidsFirst: Quality Counts for Kids Task Force, composed of representatives from 21 public and private organizations and agencies, met seven times in 2004 to examine a wide range of quality rating and tiered reimbursement options, and was guided by national research and the experiences of other states when developing quality rating systems.
- ♦ Three public hearings were held in October 2004 to receive comments on the Task Force recommendations. Comments were also received directly by the Department of Workforce Development.
- ♦ The Department of Children and Families collected further feedback from meetings with stakeholders beginning in late 2008. The feedback the Department received consistently reaffirmed the need for supporting quality child care and rewarding providers who strive for greater quality. Programs providing higher quality care should be reimbursed higher than those meeting minimum standards.
- ♦ Twenty-two other states have adopted QRIS programs, including Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont and the District of Columbia. Wisconsin will be the 23rd state to implement a state-wide quality rating and improvement system. Every other state in the United States (27 states) is in the process of developing Quality Rating and Improvement Systems.[†]

Program Participation

All regulated child care centers, family child care providers and Head Start programs – including both certified and licensed providers – may participate in YoungStar by completing a YoungStar Participation Request form and Wisconsin Shares Contract available on the YoungStar website. Participation in the program is required for all programs serving children in the Wisconsin Shares program and optional for other programs.

[†] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families: National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center:
http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/quickfact_QRIS.html. Accessed 18 November, 2010.

Providers who wish to participate in YoungStar will be required to sign a contract stating that they are willing to serve children who receive Wisconsin Shares subsidies. If a provider has no open slots available to accept children who receive Wisconsin Shares subsidies, the provider must agree to accept these children in the future. Every provider who wishes to be rated must also agree to:

- ◆ Collect co-payments from Wisconsin Shares recipients;
- ◆ Follow all Wisconsin Shares attendance reporting requirements;
- ◆ Acknowledge reading and agreeing with the Shares Subsidy Policy Guide for Child Care Providers;
- ◆ Provide accurate and up-to-date information to The Registry, Wisconsin's recognition system for the childhood care and education profession;
- ◆ Accurately represent the YoungStar rating a provider receives in advertisements, publications, or other public contexts;
- ◆ Provide accurate information for rating;
- ◆ Accept the star rating that is received and build a Quality Improvement Plan based upon coaching and consultation with a technical assistance provider; and
- ◆ Notify YoungStar regional office in the event of significant turnover of staff or director, the program is identified as out of regulatory compliance, or the program closes (within 30 days of closing).

Regulatory Compliance

The following definitions will be in effect for licensed and certified centers.

Licensed Providers

Licensed providers will be out of regulatory compliance upon receipt of notice from the Department of Children and Families that the program has 1) been revoked; 2) been denied a license; or 3) has had their license suspended. For programs that are found to be out of regulatory compliance, the provider's rating will be changed to a one star.

All three regulatory actions, the revocation, denial and suspension, have an associated appeal right, as described in Ch. 227, Wis. Stats.

In the case of revocations, denials and license suspensions, the program will remain out of regulatory compliance until the regulatory enforcement action is resolved. Any future participation in the Wisconsin Shares program depends upon the conditions articulated in the final ruling or the settlement of the revocation case. If the program continues to operate during the revocation or denial proceedings, the provider will continue to have access to YoungStar training and technical assistance. If and when a provider is deemed to be in regulatory compliance, the provider's prior rating will be restored.

The Department of Children and Families Severity Index tool will be implemented with licensed programs on July 1, 2011. Until then, regulatory compliance status will be defined only by revocations, denials of licensure, or license suspension.

Certified Providers

Certified providers will become out of regulatory compliance upon receipt of notice from the Department of Children and Families that the program has been revoked or denied re-certification.

As with licensed providers, in the case of programs that are found to be out of regulatory compliance, the provider's rating will be changed to a one star. If the program continues to operate during the regulatory enforcement proceedings, the provider will continue to have access to YoungStar training and technical assistance. If and when a provider is deemed to be in regulatory compliance, the provider's prior rating will be restored.

The Department of Children and Families Severity Index tool will be implemented with county certifying agencies on July 1, 2011. Until then, regulatory compliance status will be defined only by revocations and denials of certification.

Shares Suspension

If a provider is suspended from the Wisconsin Shares program, their rating will be changed to one star. The provider will remain at one star until the term of the YoungStar/Shares Participation Contract expires. At that time the provider will be removed from the YoungStar program.

If the program continues to operate after the Shares suspension, the provider will continue to have access to YoungStar training and technical assistance until such time as they are removed from the program. If the provider is subsequently reinstated, the provider's prior rating will be restored.

Rating Providers

The YoungStar rating scale is a five star system, which uses compliance with existing child care regulations as a base. Rating will occur annually. All participating programs that sign a Wisconsin Shares contract will receive two stars unless the program is out of regulatory compliance. The following limited number of exceptions will be made to allow rating changes when major milestones are achieved: a program or center becoming accredited, a family child care director earning an associate or bachelor's degree, or 50% or more of classroom teachers in a group center increasing their education.

Providers will be able to choose the level and intensity of training and technical assistance they receive and the type of rating they want to have performed: automatic, technical or formal with observation.

◆ **One Star Rating**

- All providers who are out of regulatory compliance will receive **one star**.

◆ **Two Star Rating**

- **Automated rating:** A provider that does not want training or technical assistance and does not want a technical consultant to come visit their program could receive an automated rating based upon educational qualifications of lead teacher/director alone, verified by The Registry. Providers that choose this option cannot receive more than **two stars**.

- ◆ **Two or Three Star Rating**
 - **Technical Rating:** A technical consultant from the regional office will verify education and training through The Registry. The program may then choose to have a technical rating done before or after training and technical assistance is administered. The process will allow providers to give technical consultants any desired information about the program before a technical rating is posted online.
 - After receiving the desired training and technical assistance programs, the provider may receive **two or three stars** from their technical consultant. If a technical consultant comes into a program and believes the program is ready to have a formal rating with observation, the technical consultant can encourage the program to have a formal rating with observation.
- ◆ **Four or Five Star Rating**
 - **Formal Rating with Observation:** To achieve four or five stars, programs must receive a formal rating with observation based upon interviews and selected classroom observations utilizing the tools below.
 - Environmental Rating Scales: Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS), the Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS) or the Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS);
 - Program/Business Administration Scales to address: learning environment and curriculum, business practices, professional development, staff benefits and parent/family involvement; and
 - Health and wellness to ensure children are receiving healthy meals and are getting enough physical activity.
 - **Accredited Providers:** Accredited providers will automatically be rated a four or five star, depending on the accreditation. Accreditation bodies that will be accepted as a direct proxy for a rating include: National Association for the Education of Young Children, City of Madison Accreditation for group centers and family child care programs, National Association Commission for Early Care and Education Programs, National Association for Family Child Care Accreditation, as well as full compliance with Head Start Performance Standards with no deficiencies. The accrediting bodies are explained further in the Glossary of Terms.
 - Accredited family providers who have sent in a participation agreement and a Wisconsin Shares contract form will receive **five stars** if The Registry indicates adequate credit based training. If the provider does not have adequate credit-based training reflected in The Registry, they will receive **four stars**.
 - All accredited group providers who have sent in a YoungStar Participation Form and a Wisconsin Shares Contract form will receive **five stars**.

- Head Start programs with no findings of deficiency will receive **five stars.**[‡]

Currently Accredited Child Care Programs in Wisconsin

- ♦ NAEYC Accredited group child care centers – 107 centers
- ♦ NAC Accredited group child care centers – 19 centers
- ♦ NAFCC Accredited family child care programs – 5 programs
- ♦ Head Start Performance Standards with no deficiencies – 135 programs
- ♦ City of Madison Accreditation Program – 106 programs

Point Scale

Star levels above two stars are achieved on the basis of the total number of points earned in a 40-point quality indicator system. Points can be earned in the following four categories:

- Educational qualifications;
- Learning environment and curriculum;
- Professional practices; and
- Health and well-being.

To advance in the rating system, providers will be required to reach designated minimum levels in each category. These minimums ensure that points are not accumulated entirely in one category, while other quality indicators are ignored. Beyond the designated minimum requirements, providers have options of accumulating points in different facets of their child care program operations. All participating programs will be eligible for a menu of technical supports both before and after technical rating and formal rating with observation to improve the quality of the child care program and advance in the star system.

The YoungStar model for family child care programs is customized to reflect the different operational realities of a family child care operation. More than half of the states with QRIS have established separate models for family and group child care programs in recognition of the distinct differences in the two settings. Deliberations during the development of the 2005 model and feedback since that time have confirmed the need to recognize this distinction, without reducing standards for either type of provider.

Please see Appendix F for a model of the points and star levels in YoungStar.

Star Rating Estimates

The Consortium, administrator of the YoungStar regional offices, has initiated work at the regional level as of November 1, 2010. Official ratings will begin to be posted to the YoungStar website beginning in late December. Current provider star level estimates are

[‡] A Head Start deficiency, determined by federal Head Start staff, is defined as: An area or areas of performance in which an Early Head Start or Head Start grantee agency is not in compliance with State or Federal requirements, such as (A) A threat to the health, safety, or civil rights of children or staff; (B) A denial to parents of the exercise of their full roles and responsibilities related to program governance; (C) A failure to perform substantially the requirements related to Early Childhood Development and Health Services, Family and Community Partnerships, or Program Design and Management; or (D) The misuse of Head Start grant funds.

below based on data that has been collected. These estimates do not include providers who only care for school-aged children.

Star Level	Current Providers Star Level Estimates	Notes
★	252	Based upon the number of providers in Wisconsin who are out of regulatory compliance (as defined on Page 7 of this report).
★★ or ★★★	7032	Based upon the number of providers that are in regulatory compliance but are not accredited. When Technical Consultant or Rating Observers come into these programs to do rating and observation, providers will receive an actual rating.
★★★★	45	Based upon the number of family child care programs that are accredited by the City of Madison or by the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC).
★★★★★	324	Based upon the number of group child care programs that are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Accreditation Commission (NAC), the City of Madison, or Head Start programs who meet Head Start Performance Standards with no findings of deficiency.

Future Star Level Projections

Initial projections have been developed to forecast the movement in star levels over time of Wisconsin child care programs who participate in YoungStar. Below are estimates of anticipated movement of child care programs. The movement in star levels represents the anticipated improvement in child care quality. These are based on the experiences of other states and initial data collected as part of YoungStar development.

Future Projections for Star Level Progression				
<i>2011-2015</i>				
Star Level	Proportion of Programs Participating			
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
1 Star	10%	8%	6%	5%
2 Star	40%	39%	37%	34%
3 Star	29%	31%	33%	35%
4 Star	8%	8%	9%	10%
5 Star	13%	14%	15%	16%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

Provider Qualifications

Based upon feedback from the provider community, DCF has incorporated the education and working experience of child care providers into the YoungStar model.

Education

The Registry, Wisconsin's recognition system for the childhood care and education profession, will verify entry level and continuing education requirements defined by DCF.

Family Provider Qualifications. In family child care, one individual is often responsible for both the oversight of the business and caring for children. Registry certificates validate each recipient's unique training background. Providers will receive higher points for education and training levels.

Group Staff Qualifications. Points accumulate in the education category according to the education levels of teachers. Training and education are verified using the levels of The Registry's career ladder. Registry certificates will validate each recipient's unique training background. Providers will receive higher points for education levels of lead teachers and the director as verified by The Registry. In group child care settings, thresholds have been established for the percent of classrooms that have lead teachers reaching higher levels on The Registry scale. For example, more points would be awarded when 100% of classrooms have a lead teacher with an associate degree than if only 50% of the lead teachers have associate degrees.

Group Director Qualifications. Credentials of directors will be comparably aligned with Registry levels. Directors are responsible for recruitment, hiring, guidance and teaching of staff and establishing a foundation for the program's quality. Research has confirmed that centers with well-qualified directors demonstrate higher quality care.[§]

Work Experience

DCF incorporated the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential as a means of accumulating points in YoungStar. The CDA is a largely experience-based credential and has historically been pursued by working child care providers.

The Department also has collaborated closely with the Wisconsin Technical College System to identify opportunities for providers to earn credit by translating their personal life experiences into specified credit values through the completion of a portfolio that demonstrates competencies already met. T.E.A.C.H. scholarships can help finance this work. See Glossary for an explanation of the T.E.A.C.H. and R.E.W.A.R.D. programs.

Finally, years of experience and training received will also be valuable to child care providers as they establish their learning environment and professional practices. The ability of a provider to put into practice the competencies gained through direct teaching experiences and informal training received can result in points earned in the quality indicator areas of early learning environment and professional practices.

Learning Environment and Curriculum

The quality of the child care learning environment will be validated utilizing nationally recognized, evidence-based tools. Elements of a high quality environment include well-equipped learning environments and written weekly lesson plans that include at least 15 minutes of daily reading/early literacy skill building.

[§] National Association for the Education of Young Children. *NAEYC Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) Toolkit*. <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/state/QRSToolkit2009.pdf>. Accessed 8 November 2010.

Programs could also accumulate points for:

- ◆ Demonstrating an Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) score average of five with no subscale less than 4;
- ◆ Aligning program with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS);
- ◆ Using individual child portfolios to identify and track child outcomes; and
- ◆ Documenting use of quality improvement assessments and use of written improvement plans.

Professional Practices

This category recognizes strong business and professional practice to support staff and parents, including:

- Timely and accurate completion of Wisconsin Shares report forms and all program integrity requirements as provided in s. 49.155 Wisconsin Statutes;
- Staff evaluation plans, paid professional time of at least 25 hours a year, 75% or higher retention of well-educated lead teaching staff; and
- Participation in organizations that lead/advocate for quality care and education, development of job descriptions and hiring practices that have expectation for a well-trained and educated workforce; staff benefits – including salary scale, written personnel policies, health insurance, paid holidays, sick leave and other supports for staff.

Indication of strong parental involvement including regular communication with parents, opportunity for them to become involved in a program, communication about children's activities, newsletters and other activities are included in this category.

Health and Wellness

Providers can earn points in this category by demonstrating that program curriculum supports the physical, nutrition and health needs of young children; equips providers with protective factors and tools to prevent and detect early signs of child abuse and neglect; and takes into account the social and emotional needs of all children in care, particularly of children with special needs.

Specific ways providers can accumulate points will include:

- Training on the Center for the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (CSEFEL) pyramid model modules and/or strategies;
- Incorporation of Strengthening Families materials into staff preparation and training (see Glossary for definition);
- Participating in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and ensuring that children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day; and
- Demonstrating the capacity to care for children with special physical, emotional, developmental or behavioral needs will also earn points.

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

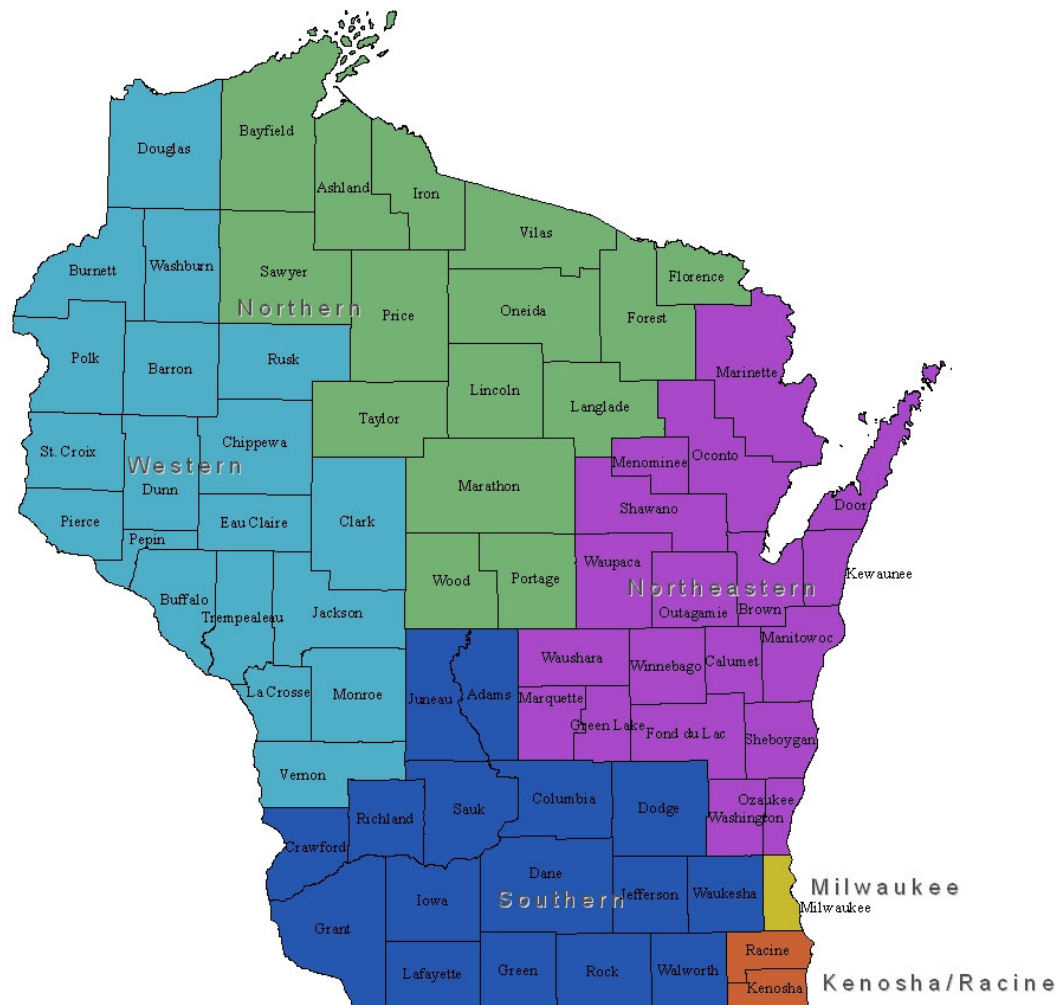
DCF has been working closely with leaders and experts in the area of serving young children with disabilities in inclusive settings in Wisconsin, including CESA 4 and Disability Rights Wisconsin. These efforts and coordination with the Department of Public Instruction and the Birth to 3 program have led to research-based recommendations for how to most effectively serve children with disabilities, prepare early care providers for caring for children with special needs and work with families.

IMPLEMENTATION

Regional Offices

Through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process, the Department selected a vendor called “The Consortium,” consisting of three organizations: Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA), Celebrate Children Foundation (CCF) and Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) (hereafter referred to as “The Consortium”). The Consortium came together to administer YoungStar in each of the six regions which are geographically based on the Department’s regional structure. The Consortium will work with existing and new local training and technical assistance providers, such as Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, as well as institutions of higher education to deliver services to providers within the regions.

YoungStar Regional Map with Counties



In addition to rating providers, The Consortium will be responsible for administering micro-grants to providers to support quality improvement efforts, and for providing technical assistance to providers seeking to improve and advance in the rating system. They will coordinate closely with certifying and licensing entities to ensure programs are in regulatory compliance. Finally, The Consortium will be responsible for sharing information with parents and the public about child care providers.

In the RFP, the Department sought out applicants who could demonstrate:

- ◆ The ability to harness the region's existing infrastructure to support quality child care. The Department explicitly wanted to build upon existing efforts, not to duplicate them, and applicants needed to demonstrate their capacity to do so.
- ◆ The ability to bring additional resources to bear in the form of philanthropic, community, and corporate partners. YoungStar will only be successful if it is collectively owned by the broad range of constituents touched by early care and education.
- ◆ The requisite industry and programmatic expertise to provide meaningful training and technical assistance to child care providers on a broad range of issues.
- ◆ The organizational and leadership capacity to manage and deliver the services required to administer the Quality Rating and Improvement System.
- ◆ The community presence and cultural competence required to meet the specific needs of the region's provider and parent population. The Department was looking for a vendor who could build upon existing relationships to deliver culturally competent services to providers in Wisconsin.

Under the contract between DCF and The Consortium, The Consortium is responsible for the following deliverables:

- ◆ Demonstrate a thorough understanding of early care and education and developmentally appropriate practices and in meeting the needs of parents by region.
- ◆ Establish partnerships and collaborations to ensure a broad range of services are available and resources are leveraged to supplement the State resources for the program. Contractors were required to explicitly identify how their planned effort built on existing infrastructure and did not duplicate existing resources.
- ◆ Make valid and reliable environmental ratings using Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale –Revised (ECERS-R), Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R), Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale -Revised (FCCERS-R) scoring.
- ◆ Make valid and reliable Program Administration Scale and Business Administration Scale ratings.
- ◆ Administer micro-grants.
- ◆ Consult with child care providers, directors, and staff to formulate detailed quality improvement plans.

- ◆ Ensure that quality improvement plans have been implemented, customized training and technical assistance have been received by programs, and information for parents has been widely disseminated.
- ◆ Coordinate with the local Child Care Resource and Referral agency, at least one institute of higher education, and The Registry to establish efficient information sharing around provider credentials.
- ◆ Use culturally competent staff and appropriate materials when serving a diverse workforce.
- ◆ Establish increased opportunities for community-based, credit-based course instruction and pathways on early childhood development instruction and competency based training.
- ◆ Develop a mentorship program that connects high quality, experienced child care providers with less experienced or lower-rated providers.
- ◆ Administer training and technical assistance including research based, developmentally appropriate consultation, mentoring and coaching to providers.
- ◆ Perform technical ratings and formal ratings with observation.
- ◆ Collaborate regionally with training and technical assistance partners to create increased opportunities in non-traditional formats of delivery.

Estimated Revenues and Expenditures

On June 23, the Joint Finance Committee approved the reallocation of anticipated Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy savings of \$5,616,900 FED in SFY11 for YoungStar and transferred \$4,429,900 FED in SFY11 from DCF to the JFC's federal funds program supplements appropriation, with the understanding that the Department would have to return to the JFC to request any further expenditure of these funds for YoungStar in SFY11. The funding provision included:

- \$1.5 million to provide immediate training and technical assistance to child care providers using the Together Quality Grows model in 12 targeted counties: Dane, Eau Claire, Iron, Kenosha, La Crosse, Marathon, Milwaukee, Racine, Rock, Washburn, Waukesha and Wood;
- \$500,000 to increase funding for child care scholarship and stipend programs T.E.A.C.H. and R.E.W.A.R.D.;
- \$616,900 for state administrative costs to oversee and implement YoungStar;
- \$3 million for data collection and assessment activities;

YoungStar can be implemented fully including tiered reimbursement within existing resources available in the 2009-11 biennium, and within DCF's September 15, 2010 budget proposal for the 2011-13 biennium. The tables below show the projected expenditures for the next five years.

	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
<i>Regional Service Delivery</i>					
Quality Assurance Monitoring	\$2,436,800	\$3,249,000	\$3,249,000	\$3,249,000	\$3,249,000
Training and Technical Assistance	\$2,874,500	\$2,219,200	\$2,219,200	\$2,219,200	\$2,219,200
Micro-grants	\$1,731,400	\$1,442,800	\$1,154,300	\$1,154,300	\$1,154,300
Start Up/Grant Administration	\$1,183,300	\$691,100	\$662,300	\$662,300	\$662,300
Total	\$8,226,000	\$7,602,100	\$7,284,800	\$7,284,800	\$7,284,800
<i>State Level Administration</i>					
Communication	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
IT	\$300,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
State Staff	\$316,900	\$316,900	\$316,900	\$316,900	\$316,900
Ongoing Evaluation	\$155,500	\$138,500	\$132,500	\$132,500	\$132,500
Total	\$892,400	\$725,100	\$719,400	\$719,400	\$719,400
<i>Total – Regional and State</i>	\$9,118,400*	\$8,327,200	\$8,004,200	\$8,004,200	\$8,004,200

*The total does not include \$500,000 approved by JFC for T.E.A.C.H. and R.E.W.A.R.D. programs.

In addition, implementation of the tiered reimbursement system under YoungStar will result in quality incentive payments scheduled to begin in July, 2011. Providers that are one star (and, thus, not in regulatory compliance) will not be allowed to participate in the Wisconsin Shares program. Providers with a two star rating will be paid their current base rate. Providers with a three star rating would be paid a 5% quality incentive addition to the base rate, providers with a four star rating would receive a 10% quality incentive addition, and providers with a five star rating would receive a 25% quality incentive payment above from the base rate.

The projected net costs of eliminating funding for one-star providers and providing quality incentive payments are broken down below:

	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015
Tiered Reimbursement	N/A	\$3,412,700	\$4,724,100	\$6,036,200	\$7,087,900

Currently, the Department funds the Wisconsin Child Care program with a combination of state GPR funds and federal child care and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. We anticipate that these fund sources will continue to be used for the program in the future, including the full implementation of the YoungStar program and quality incentive payments.

Public/Private Partnerships and Other Possible Funding

The Department and The Consortium will partner with existing organizations in Wisconsin to ensure cooperation and collaboration partnerships are utilized whenever possible to deliver services.

The proposal that was submitted by The Consortium outlined goals and plans for leveraging resources and building relationships with local partners in each of the six YoungStar regions. Through existing and new partnerships, the Celebrate Children Foundation, as part of The Consortium will focus efforts on fund development to be used for matching micro-grants and/or funding additional training and technical assistance to providers. The Consortium's target is to raise \$600,000 within the first two contract years between the six regions. The \$600,000 will be used to fund additional micro-grants for provider quality improvement.

A key aspect of this plan is developing partnerships with key business organizations that will assist in identifying funders. The Consortium will hold formal discussions with community foundations, United Way organizations, unions, private foundations and national organizations. In other states, we have seen philanthropy act as a powerful force for quality rating and improvement systems.

Quality Incentive Payments

Chapter 49.155 Wisconsin Statutes establishes base reimbursement rates in Wisconsin Shares. Beginning July 1, 2011, the Department proposes that quality incentive payments in the Wisconsin Shares program, beyond the base reimbursement rate, be linked directly to the quality of the provider. By creating this link in July 2011, providers will have time to access training and technical assistance and be rated before their payments are affected.

Connection to Wisconsin Shares Reimbursement – Family and Group Programs

One Star	No participation in Wisconsin Shares
Two Stars	No change
Three Stars	5% quality incentive on top of reimbursement base
Four Stars	10% quality incentive on top of reimbursement base
Five Stars	25 % quality incentive on top of reimbursement base

Evaluation

External Evaluation

The Department is working with the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) Waisman Center to analyze the results of the QRIS to ensure that YoungStar is being implemented and monitored in a way that is supportive of early care and education programs and parents.

UW-Madison's evaluation will follow the Missouri Outcomes Study from the Quality Rating Study** which showed improvement in child outcomes. This evaluation will measure individualized child outcomes at programs of different star levels using a standardized and research-backed tool. The evaluation will also track improvement in star levels for programs and of child care quality improvements.

The data collected as part of this study will be used to validate the YoungStar rating scale by determining if children who are served by higher-rated providers gain more school readiness skills than children who are served by lower-rated providers. Evaluators will take a random sample of YoungStar-rated providers and perform an assessment of school readiness on a sample of children in the program at two points in time (9 to 12 months apart) in the fall of 2012 and in the spring of 2013. The timing will allow for the YoungStar program to be implemented so that impact can be ascertained. The sample will remain the same throughout the study, so it is necessary to choose an initial sample that is large enough to take into account the fact that some of the children will move within the study period.

The measurements for school readiness would include measurements of early literacy (using tests such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test or the Woodcock Johnson test of achievement) as well as behavior assessments. Children in higher rated programs would be compared to children in lower rated programs.

In addition to the aforementioned evaluations, UW-Madison will conduct focus groups with both child care program directors and family child care providers across star levels to gather qualitative measures of how YoungStar is working for them. In addition, the same will be done with parents to find out if the star rating is affecting the child care provider choices they are making and what other factors are being considered. Results from this evaluation will be tied into the Department of Public Instruction's Longitudinal Data System (see below for details).

Internal Evaluation

The Department will also conduct its own evaluation of YoungStar. The collection of this data will begin as soon as YoungStar is implemented in the regions. YoungStar staff met with staff from DCF's Office of Performance and Quality Assurance to discuss how to further coordinate program specific measures, including the following:

- a) The participation rate of YoungStar.
- b) The characteristics of the program at the beginning of their involvement and the improvements made in terms of quality as a result of participation in the program.

** Thornburg, K. et al. (2009). *The Missouri Quality Rating System School Readiness Study*. Accessed 20 October 2010: <http://mucenter.missouri.edu/MOQRSreport.pdf>

- c) Discernable improvements in the quality of care for providers that serve children primarily receiving Wisconsin Shares after the providers participate in YoungStar for a period of time.
- d) Reasons why programs choosing to participate or not.
- e) Feedback parents offer in terms of ease of accessing the system and connections to more information and higher quality programs.
- f) Assessment of whether technical assistance and program support is sufficient to support programs participating in YoungStar.
- g) Identification of any mid-course corrections based on the experience of programs and parents.
- h) The retention rate of children within the child care programs.
- i) The increased demand for early care and education credit-based instruction to strengthen the provider workforce, and an assessment of the availability of such training and instruction in all areas of the state.
- j) The increased demand for content-based training [(Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), Strengthening Families, etc.)]

Collaboration with the Department of Public Instruction

Staff at DCF are working with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to collaborate in the formation of a Longitudinal Data System (LDS) to track child outcome data over the child's school career. We will participate in committees and workgroups with DPI staff to build consensus around common data elements and to create a work plan for how, what and when data elements can be shared between Departments. Within three to five years from full implementation of YoungStar, participating children will be able to be tracked through the LDS and additional information will be gleaned about the effects of participating in YoungStar. The data from YoungStar internal and external evaluation could be linked to future efforts in the Department of Public Instruction's LDS.

Before- and Afterschool Programs

The Department of Children and Families intends for YoungStar to be applied to children of all ages served by the Wisconsin Shares program, including school-aged children. It is anticipated that ratings of programs serving school-aged children will constitute the second phase of YoungStar beginning July 1, 2011.

DCF staff, in collaboration with the Wisconsin Afterschool Network (WAN) has begun initial planning for adding school-aged programs to YoungStar. A work group was formed (including participants from DPI, WAN, Marshfield Clinic, YMCA, The Registry, the City of Madison, several school districts around the state, SFTA, WECA, school-age programs from

around the state and the Boys and Girls Clubs) to create a plan for the second phase of YoungStar to include school-aged children.

The focus of the group includes:

- ◆ Criteria for learning environment and curriculum, professional practices and health and wellness;
- ◆ Sustainability;
- ◆ Licensing and other DCF regulations that may be applied differently in child care settings versus before- and afterschool programs;
- ◆ Using data to set goals and measure progress; and
- ◆ Accreditation

YOUNGSTAR FOR PROVIDERS

To improve the quality of the care they provide, child care providers need support in the areas of training, technical assistance and micro-grants. The Department, has a history of supporting providers through program such as T.E.A.C.H. and R.E.W.A.R.D and through pilots like Together Quality Grows. DCF will build upon these efforts to ensure the success of YoungStar.

Training and Technical Assistance

Demonstrated Success

- ◆ T.E.A.C.H./R.E.W.A.R.D. For FY 2010, there was \$3.4 million in T.E.A.C.H. scholarships for child care teachers to take credit-based training for advancing their educations and providing R.E.W.A.R.D. stipends to providers who stay in the field of early care and education. These two programs help teachers/providers and directors stay in programs and provide high quality care based on educational achievement. The turnover rate for all Wisconsin providers in the last decade is 40%, for T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients it is only 11.4%.
- ◆ Training/Technical Assistance. In FY 2010, \$600,000 was budgeted to fund ongoing training and technical assistance projects, including funding to The Registry, as well as training and technical assistance dollars contracted to the SFTA to support child care resource and referral programs to deliver training on the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards, and Wisconsin Pyramid Model social and emotional development. These training and technical assistance dollars have supported the development of a cadre of staff who have demonstrated reliability and validity in Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale observation and ratings. For the past four years over 100 family and group programs have received on-site observations, technical assistance and in the most recent year, grants through the Together Quality Grows/Grow in Quality program pilot projects, which will help them prepare for the YoungStar quality rating.
- ◆ Child Care Information Center. For FY 2010, the Child Care Information Center was funded to provide technical assistance materials for providers working on the QRIS.

Immediate Training and Technical Assistance

The Joint Finance Committee allocated an additional \$500,000 in FY 2011 to the T.E.A.C.H. and R.E.W.A.R.D. programs to increase funding for child care scholarships. The additional \$500,000 and the pending roll out of YoungStar have significantly increased the demand for this program. WECA awarded T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to 788 providers in FY 2010 ^{††}. Of these scholarships, 442 were providers who had never before received a scholarship. To compare, 719 providers received scholarships in FY 2009, resulting in an increase of **nearly 10 percent**. This work resulted in providers earning 12,122 credit hours in FY 2010. **See Appendix A for a map of T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipient locations.**

^{††} WECA's Fiscal Year runs from October 1st to September 30th

The JFC also allocated \$1.5 million to be used for immediate and targeted training and technical assistance to child care providers and programs in 12 counties: Milwaukee, Dane, Racine, Kenosha, Marathon, Waukesha, La Crosse, Rock, Eau Claire, Wood, Iron and Washburn. **Please see Appendices A1-A12 for maps which illustrate the concentration of providers and children in each of the 12 targeted counties.**

Immediate training and technical assistance, which started July 1, 2010 and will be completed by December 31, 2010, delivers training content based on best practice to ensure early care and education competency and technical assistance based upon the Together Quality Grows observation rating and technical consultation model. It is also supporting the design of new online courses in key areas such as inclusion of children with disabilities.

To deliver the immediate training and technical assistance, contracts were established with SFTA and WECA as well as with nine colleges from the Wisconsin Technical College System and UW System for the delivery of immediate training and technical assistance opportunities.

To date, 5,558 units of training and technical assistance have been delivered. Targeted training and technical assistance is being delivered to support quality improvement in child care programs. These trainings will prepare child care programs for YoungStar.

Technical Assistance through Supporting Families Together Association

Within the 12 targeted counties, 49 group centers and 48 family child care providers are receiving technical assistance and on-site environmental ratings to prepare for a YoungStar quality rating. Child Care Resource and Referral staffing have completed 231 on-site visits to these programs for a total of 797 hours. Participating child care programs will develop quality improvement plans to identify areas for change, and will create a time line for quality improvement. Technical consultants will provide targeted technical assistance, based on the individualized needs of a program.

SFTA also has provided 36 hours of evening phone coverage with the “YoungStar warm-line” that was supported by SFTA resources and is providing live phone coverage on Tuesday and Thursday evenings so providers can call with questions related to YoungStar.

SFTA used the Together Quality Grows (TQG) model for supporting providers with immediate training and technical assistance opportunities. In prior cohorts of both group and family child care providers who received initial training and technical assistance through TQG, providers showed gains in quality from pre-assessment to post-assessment as shown below. Providers were rated using a seven-point environmental rating scale. The data below indicated the averages across 16 sites that have been assessed as of September 30, 2010. TQG sites that were added due to JFC funding are not included in this data as they have not had final assessments. **See Appendix B for a map of Together Quality Grows sites.**

Together Quality Grows Provider Assessment Outcomes						
Group Child Care Centers				Family Child Care Providers		
Quality Indicator	Average of Provider Pre-Assessment Score	Average of Provider Post-Assessment Score	Change from Pre-Assessment to Post Assessment	Average of Provider Pre-Assessment Score	Average of Provider Post-Assessment Score	Change from Pre-Assessment to Post Assessment
Space and Furnishings	59%	74%	+15%	56%	86%	+30%
Personal Care	43%	61%	+18%	43%	83%	+40%
Listening and Talking	56%	61%	+5%	64%	100%	+36%
Activities	49%	77%	+28%	44%	86%	+42%
Interactions	63%	77%	+14%	74%	100%	+26%
Program Structure	53%	78%	+25%	56%	100%	+44%
Total (out of 100%)	53%	66%	+13%	56%	90%	+34%

Technical Assistance through Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

WECA has provided targeted technical assistance through Child and Adult Care Food Program consultants to 608 providers in the target counties. During these visits, over 75% of providers indicated that the on-site YoungStar information was helpful and that they now know a fair amount of information about YoungStar.

The following chart illustrates the technical assistance that was provided in the target counties during Child and Adult Care Food Program consultations:

Target County Name	Number of Programs Served
Dane	91
Eau Claire	58
Kenosha	6
La Crosse	25
Marathon	110
Milwaukee	217
Racine	10
Rock	11
Washburn	6
Waukesha	8
Wood	60
Other county	6
Total On-site Visits:	608

WECA has also developed a Professional Development Planning Tool available on their website to support individuals with professional development questions. As of November

15th, 41 counseling sessions have been delivered via one-to-one conversations either on site at WECA or via phone.

Training Delivered through Supporting Families Together Association and Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

To date, WECA and SFTA have trained 4,468 participants through 156 training sessions. Please see Appendix C for a complete list of trainings provided by WECA and SFTA.

Immediate YoungStar Training Participation through WECA and SFTA

YoungStar Overview: 1,665 participants through 46 trainings

Environment and Curriculum: 1,730 participants through 57 trainings

Professional Practices: 245 participants through 14 trainings

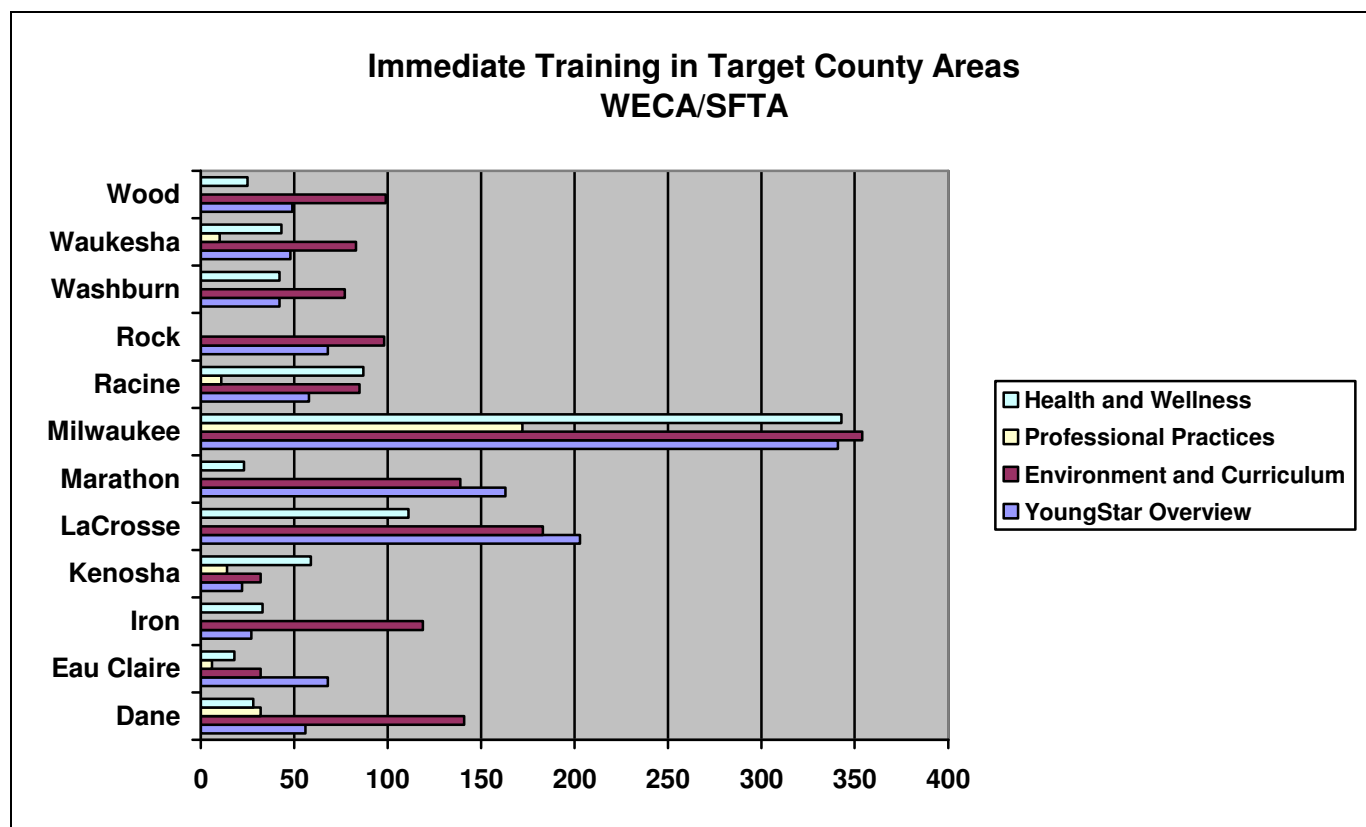
Health and Wellness: 828 participants through 39 trainings

TOTAL: 4,468 training participants reached through 156 trainings

- ◆ WECA has provided trainings in YoungStar overview, professional practices/staff benefits, provider portfolio development, accreditation training, and health and wellness training opportunities. WECA also has been delivering training and technical assistance through food program participation visits and has also developed a professional development planning tool available on their website that can be used by staff to identify ongoing professional development needs. The tool includes opportunity to have the staff person contact WECA directly to have one-on-one phone consultation.
- ◆ Using best practices for adult education delivery, SFTA has administered the following types of training:
 - **YoungStar Overviews:** These trainings give providers an overview of the YoungStar program basic principles and offer providers an opportunity to ask questions and have questions answered.
 - **Wisconsin Pyramid Model work:** These trainings focus on intentional teaching of social skills and emotional competencies so that providers of early care and education can help children develop the capacity to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in appropriate ways; and explore the environment and learn.
 - **Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) training and walk-throughs:** These trainings help providers to specify developmental expectations for children from birth through entrance to first grade. Tools such as these help providers continue to achieve success and build comfort and reassurance about what a quality improvement rating systems will bring for them.
 - **Environmental rating work:** These focus on the role of rating scales in quality improvement. Scoring basics and commonly low scoring items will be discussed.

Training in Target Counties Provided by Supporting Families Together Association and Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

The table below shows the breakdown of training participants in the 12 target counties. Additionally, training partners held webinars to provide training in YoungStar Overview and Environment and Curriculum content to reach providers all over the state. These were attended online by 586 additional participants.



In addition to training delivered face-to-face, SFTA delivered a Webinar on Child Portfolio Development: This training, which was held on November 4, attended virtually by over 40 participants, was designed to help programs that were ready learn to develop child portfolios. Participants were able to identify three effective approaches to portfolio development and to articulate the major steps needed to implement child portfolio development in their programs. The goals and objectives of this webinar were to: Learn the value of portfolios as a way to; document child progress, plan for individualized learning, and share meaningful information with parents.

Training and Technical Assistance through Institutions of Higher Education

Higher levels of provider education are consistently shown to have a positive effect on the delivery of early care and education. In Wisconsin, many providers want to take credit-based coursework so that they can move up in The Registry Career Levels and in YoungStar levels. Access to credit-based training is not available across the state, in non-traditional formats. Please see Appendix C for a complete list of trainings provided by institutions of higher education.

Due to JFC's funding of immediate training and technical assistance, institutions of higher education provided training to 738 individuals since September. Additionally, to increase availability of credit-based training, the Department contracted with institutions of higher education to develop training for providers in the field of early care and education. Online courses are currently offered at UW-Milwaukee, Waukesha County Technical College, and Gateway Technical College. UW-Whitewater is working to create online credit-based courses.

The following courses have been or are being developed for three credits:

- ♦ **Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards** - Development of course offerings in non-traditional formats, and also in coordination with Practicum One
Offered at: UW Stout, Gateway Technical College, Blackhawk Technical College, MidState Technical College and Chippewa Valley Technical College
- ♦ **Inclusive Practices in early childhood settings** - Development of course offerings in "Children with Differing Abilities".
Offered at: Waukesha County Technical College, Gateway Technical College, MidState Technical College. Additionally, UW-Whitewater and Waukesha County Technical College are collaborating to offer this course online..
- ♦ **Social Emotional Foundations** - coursework
Offered at: Blackhawk Technical College
- ♦ **Early Childhood Foundations** (includes developmentally appropriate practices, developmental continuum, etc.)
Offered at: Waukesha County Technical College, Chippewa Valley Technical College, UW-Milwaukee
- ♦ **Curriculum Planning/Portfolio Development**
Offered at: UW-Whitewater, Blackhawk Technical College, Chippewa Valley Technical College
- ♦ **Child Health and Well being** (examples include, "Health, Safety and Nutrition")
Offered at: Waukesha County Technical College, Chippewa Valley Technical College, Gateway Technical College and MidState Technical College
- ♦ **Professional Practices**
Offered at: UW-Stout
- ♦ **Credit for Prior Learning**
Offered at: Wisconsin Technical College System

Non-credit based opportunities:

- ♦ **Program Administration Scale/Business Administration Scale (PAS/BAS)**
Offered at: UW-Milwaukee
- ♦ **Mentoring/Coaching Support**
Offered at: UW-Madison Waisman Center to one Dane County child care provider
- ♦ **Dual Language Learners**
Institutions of higher education, state agencies and stakeholders met to discuss the needs of Dual Language Learners. To facilitate this, UW-Madison's Waisman Center convened over 40 early childhood faculty from the Wisconsin Technical College System, the University of Wisconsin System, and Wisconsin Private Colleges, along

with other invested stakeholders to identify the resources and assets available in Wisconsin to support and prepare Early Childhood personnel to provide linguistically and culturally-responsive and developmentally-appropriate care for young children who are dual language learners.

Immediate YoungStar Training Participation through Higher Education

Early Childhood Development and Developmentally Appropriate Practices: 293

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities: 54

Environment and Curriculum and Professional Practices: 244

Health and Wellness: 129

Credit for Prior Learning: 18

TOTAL: 738 participants reached through 49 trainings as of October 25, 2010

Overall Provider Feedback

Through JFC's immediate training and technical assistance, we have learned that providers need the following for quality improvement:

- ◆ Greater access to training on the Wisconsin Pyramid Model which teaches providers about the social and emotional development of children and gives them tools for supporting all children, including those with disabilities and challenging behaviors. DCF and The Consortium are working to identify more opportunities for offering this training around the state.
- ◆ Greater access to credit-based instruction closer to home. In some rural areas of Wisconsin, there are few institutions of higher education to offer credit-based instruction and when the schools do offer the courses, many times they are cancelled because of lack of enrollment. Staff at DCF and The Consortium are working with institutions of higher education to facilitate the development of more courses to cater to the providers' needs, many of which are offered online or on nights and weekends.
- ◆ Greater access to technical assistance in Northern Wisconsin and other rural areas. Because of the vast geographic area to cover and the limited number of Technical Consultants, onsite technical assistance to providers in rural areas is a challenge. To alleviate this issue, The Consortium is in the process of hiring and training staff for each of the YoungStar regions. The contract between DCF and The Consortium requires adequate coverage for child care providers to access training, technical consultation and rating observations when requested in all areas of the state.

DCF Outreach

In addition to training delivered by the contract agencies, the Department of Children and Family staff have presented YoungStar Overviews at 38 different events to 1,715 providers and community partners in 2010.

YoungStar Training and Technical Assistance

Other state experiences and numerous studies have confirmed that sufficient, sustained supports to improve quality are critical elements for the successful implementation of a QRIS. YoungStar will utilize a variety of tools to aid providers in their education, training and technical assistance.

In addition to the base current resources identified above, the Department's contract with The Consortium will result in the investment of significant resources for the provider community in intense training and technical assistance, as well as quality improvement micro-grants to improve the quality of care provided.

Trainings will be provided in a variety of contexts depending upon the needs of providers, including online and on-site at the provider's place of operation. The Consortium will work with providers and partners to identify areas where intense training and technical assistance is needed and direct assistance in those areas. Further, after the rating for a provider is complete, regional offices will be required to explain the rating to the provider to ensure they understand the rating and can begin to make improvements as quickly as possible.

DCF will be working with The Consortium to specifically identify regional minority subcontractors to ensure cultural competence in service delivery.

The types of training that will be made available to providers include:

- ◆ Technical consultation and assistance on improving business and professional practices such as;
 - Aligning curriculum with Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards,
 - Implementing intentional child care programming practices, child assessment and other needs identified to build program quality and business acumen;
- ◆ Implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum;
- ◆ Assessing the learning environments of child care programs;
- ◆ Encouraging early literacy;
- ◆ Administering quality improvement grants to support improving the education levels of providers through supporting the scholarship and bonus program; and
- ◆ Supporting health and wellness.

Staff

Regional offices will hire staff to provide ongoing training and technical assistance and perform ratings. Each program will be assigned a technical consultant to guide the program through training and technical assistance. If a program wished to have a formal rating with observation done to attain a four or five star, a different staff member would come into the program to do the rating observation. This separation of roles is to build trust between providers and their technical consultant so that providers can feel comfortable asking for advice without worrying about being judged on their questions.

Technical consultants will be highly qualified individuals with a combination of credit-based education and experience. The following are criteria to be a technical consultant:

- ◆ Educational Qualifications equivalent to Registry Career Level 13 or higher (related associate degree plus registry credential or higher);
- ◆ Appropriate credentials, licensure, or agency endorsement for area of specialty;
- ◆ Four years experience in an approved program in the child care field, and it is preferred that the technical consultant have two years of experience working directly with children;
- ◆ Two years of responsibility for the professional growth of another adult; and
- ◆ Must have completed specific training related to adult learner education.

Professional Development Planning Tool and Counseling

The Professional Development Planning Tool, available now on the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association website, gives providers an online resource to help in planning their professional development through counseling and use of the Tool.

The Tool is available online and free counseling services are focused on the individual needs of the child care program and/or child care director, teacher or provider. Sessions include topics such as:

- Choosing an educational pathway (credit, credential, degree)
- Teach scholarship access, class format (traditional, online, accelerated)
- Previous coursework completions
- Credit for Prior Learning Experiences
- Short term and long term goals
- YoungStar points

Providers have completed 41 sessions of professional development to date. Participants in the professional development counseling sessions indicate that they feel better prepared to meet the YoungStar educational requirements, and that this session was helpful in determining individual long term goals.

Quality Micro-Grants

The Department will provide micro-grants of up to \$250 for certified providers, \$500 for licensed homes, and \$1,000 for licensed group centers. The grant program, administered by The Consortium, will specify exactly what purposes grants could be used for and require that the grant use is tied to a program's quality improvement plan, e.g., purchasing books to provide a more robust literacy program; purchasing materials for creating more developmentally-appropriate learning areas; purchasing classroom resources in multiple languages to reflect diverse populations; or adapting an environment to accommodate children with disabilities in an inclusive way. Grant funding will be tied to required participation in quality improvement planning and implementation.

If evidence of ongoing quality improvement efforts is demonstrated, it is anticipated that micro-grants will be available annually for providers.

The micro-grants could be an important area for philanthropic partners to engage in YoungStar. While the public funding for the micro-grants is small, private entities could contribute to these micro-grants to enhance the effect they have on provider quality improvement. The Celebrate Children Foundation will reach out to philanthropic and private partners to facilitate the creation of pots of money in each YoungStar region so that philanthropic donors can see their dollars working through local providers in their area.

YoungStar Appeals Process

The YoungStar review process has been designed to ensure that providers who disagree with their programmatic rating have a means by which to seek reconsideration of a rating. DCF has conferred with other states that have incorporated an appeals process into their Quality Rating and Improvement Systems and drawn from their experience. In order to ensure that the system minimizes the number of reconsiderations, YoungStar has been designed to establish:

- ◆ Clear guidelines for what program quality criteria are rated;
- ◆ Objective criteria that are tied to research (e.g., education and training verified by The Registry, valid and reliable observers conduct observations on learning environment, using nationally accepted, research based Environmental Rating Scales);
- ◆ Transparent and consistent methods for evaluating programs, including consistent rater reliability; and
- ◆ Clear documentation and justification identified of the rationale for a program's rating.

YoungStar's process will ensure that rating scores are calculated incorporating all required program criteria. This will be an automated process that ensures no one individual will be responsible for assigning a score—it will be the compilation of criteria. YoungStar will require that The Consortium have a technical consultant meet with the provider or director before the program's rating is posted to answer questions about the rating and to allow the provider to give further information. Other states have found that if the program understands the rating, they are less likely to have concerns about the rating. Programs will receive a rating annually. However, the following limited number of exceptions will be made to allow rating changes when major milestones are achieved: a program or center becoming accredited, a family or group child care director earning an associate or bachelor's degree, or 50% or more of classroom teachers in a group center increasing their education.

Review of Initial Ratings

Should a provider wish to review a rating, the following steps will be taken:

Preliminary Step – Regional Office program rater explains the program's rating to provider shortly after a rating is completed, reviewing the rationale for points awarded.

- Provider will be shown clear documentation as to why a rating was assigned and what specific points led to that rating.

Step 1 – Program Requests Rating Review.

- Provider would file written request for review of rating within 30 days of initial rating to the regional office.

- In the request, provider must identify and provide documentation to demonstrate which of the quality standards was inappropriately assessed and why.

Step 2 – Immediate Supervisor at Regional Office Reviews Rating.

- The rating supervisor from the regional office reviews the rating and documentation provided by the provider.
- If, at this stage, the supervisor questions the results or the process as a result of the documentation submitted by the provider, he/she can assign a second rater to perform a new rating.
- Supervisor either approves the original rating or requests additional information from the rater or the provider.
- The supervisor will meet with the provider to show clear documentation as to whether a new rating was assigned and what specific points led to that decision.
- This step, including any secondary reviews required, should be completed within 60 days of the request for review.

Step 3 – Executive Director at Regional Office Reviews Rating.

- If, after meeting with the immediate supervisor, the provider still disagrees with the assigned rating, the provider may appeal to the executive director of the regional office.
- If, at this stage, the executive director questions the results or the process as a result of the documentation submitted by the provider, he/she can assign a second rater to perform a new rating.
- The executive director either approves the original rating or requests additional information from the Supervisor or the provider.
- After deliberating, the executive director will meet with the provider to show clear documentation as to whether a new rating was assigned and what specific points led to that decision.
- This step, including any reviews required, should be completed within 30 days of the second request for review.

Step 4 – All Appeals Reviewed by the Director of the Bureau of Child Care Quality.

- If, in his/her review of the outcome of final appeals, the Bureau Director identifies misinterpretation of DCF policy or YoungStar point criteria, he/she can intervene in rating decisions.

Child Care Provider Outreach

The Consortium members' current presence through the Child Care Resource and Referral and WECA offices across the regions provides a strong foundation for outreach. Members of The Consortium continue to be actively engaged in efforts supported by the immediate training and technical assistance from the JFC to provide information on the elements of the YoungStar. As of November 15, 2010, more than 2,000 providers have participated in overviews of YoungStar. Prior to that, DCF leadership and staff hosted events for more than 500 providers across the state to lay out the emerging program design for YoungStar.

An ongoing component of provider outreach will continue to include assessing what providers believe they need to improve quality. Historically, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and WECA have collected this information and they will continue to collect information from providers about what targeted and tailored assistance they believe they need. Much of this information will emerge from the quality improvement plans developed and technical assistance offered.

YOUNGSTAR FOR PARENTS

Getting information into the hands of parents is an integral part of YoungStar. Until now, parents did not have a tool to search for quality child care in Wisconsin. YoungStar will reach out to parents to make sure they are getting information to help them make decisions about the care their children receive.

Communication

YoungStar will be a critical resource for families looking to easily access information on the quality of a program. DCF put out a Request for Proposal and selected a vendor who will aid The Consortium in the communications for YoungStar beginning December 1, 2010. DCF has recently developed a brochure with basic information about YoungStar that will be used for outreach to parents and is available on the YoungStar website.

The selected communications vendor will create an aggressive communication, marketing and outreach campaign to ensure that parents and providers know about YoungStar and the benefits of quality child care.

Elements of the campaign will include:

- ◆ Further development of the YoungStar website;
- ◆ Outreach through media, social marketing forums and word of mouth; and
- ◆ Partnering with community-based organizations to ensure YoungStar reaches groups who are typically harder to contact such as minority parents and providers in low-income neighborhoods.

DCF has included provisions in the RFP that require the vendor to create a strategy to target low-income, urban populations of color to ensure all families are served.

Parent Outreach

The goal of parent outreach is to ensure parents understand YoungStar and how to access information on quality. Parents will have objective ratings of individual child care programs based on research-proven criteria for quality. Parent outreach will be reflective of the diversity and web materials will be in languages other than English to accommodate the large English as a Second Language (ESL) population.

For parents, DCF will ensure that the rating system:

- ◆ Is concise and easy to understand;
- ◆ Directly connects program ratings to program quality indicators;
- ◆ Explains why quality matters in a child care program; and
- ◆ Directs parents who desire more detailed information to resources that will provide answers.

A provider's star level will be indicated on the state's licensed child care search website. The popularity of the website among parents underscores the strong demand for this type of information. In addition, parents enrolling in the Wisconsin Shares program will be provided with information on YoungStar, the benefits of quality child care, a list of child care providers in their area with the associated rating, and other useful information.

The Consortium brings significant experience in the area of parent outreach to the YoungStar implementation and operation. Communication about YoungStar will be provided through parent/caregiver referrals through Child Care Resource and Referral agencies across the state. Additional opportunities include educational seminars, collaborations with community agencies such as hospitals and birthing groups, phone and walk-in consultations, play groups, support groups, lending libraries, community events and fairs. Each YoungStar region will collaborate with the area Family Resource Centers to access a wide range of family and child-centered services that will compliment and enhance the YoungStar program.

Local organizations will also disseminate information on YoungStar through their websites, newsletters, and list serves. It will also be important to connect with Workforce Development Boards, W-2 and Job Service agencies to get information in the hands of job seekers and to work within the Department and the community to cultivate media opportunities to highlight the new approach.

Key child care organizations to be involved in the dissemination effort will include: Supporting Families Together Association, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, Wisconsin Child Care Administrators Association, Wisconsin Family Child Care Association, Early Learning Coalition, Child Care Providers Together, Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners, Institutions of Higher Education, W-2 Agencies, County Social Services, Child Care Licensing and Regulatory Agencies, Black Child Development Institute, Community Action Agencies, United Way, and hospitals and birthing centers.

Information Technology and YoungStar Website

The Department is developing the information technology system required for rating providers. This system will automate scoring and link directly to the child care information website, and provide connections to the regional offices selected for YoungStar. The website will include a searchable database so that parents can find potential providers in their area and learn about them. Participating provider star rating information will be available on the website beginning in late December.

CONCLUSION

Under Governor Doyle's leadership and his creation of the Department and Children and Families in July 2008, the state has made significant progress to improving the Wisconsin Shares program and child care regulation in Wisconsin. We have added tools to detect, investigate and stop fraud in Wisconsin Shares and tools like 2009 Wisconsin Act 19, the child care van alarm law, to keep our kids safe. The next step in improving child care in Wisconsin is the implementation of YoungStar.

Through YoungStar, the Department will not only rate child care quality in Wisconsin, but also help child care providers improve the care they give and provide a tool for parents to find quality care in their area.

More than 40 years of research demonstrates the importance of child care quality levels in predicting future outcomes for children. We know that children who attend higher quality child care are more likely to succeed in school and earn a better living. They are also less likely to engage in criminal activity and use alcohol and drugs.

We urge the swift passage of this plan and are confident through the efforts outlined in this paper, Wisconsin's children will have the opportunity to be well prepared for school, work and life.

YoungStar Five-Year Timeline

YOUNGSTAR IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

- March 2010: DCF Proposal submitted to Joint Finance Committee
- June 23, 2010: Joint Finance Committee approves YoungStar unanimously
- June 30, 2010: Request for Proposal (RFP) is released
- September 2010: Training and Technical Assistance begins in 12 targeted counties
- Late October 2010: Vendor for regional offices is selected
- November 1, 2010: Contract for regional offices begins
- November 2010: Training and Technical Assistance is rolled out statewide
- November-December 2010: Regional offices begin to rate providers
- December 2010: Provider ratings available for parents on YoungStar web site
- July 2011: Wisconsin Shares bonus payments linked to quality
- Fall 2011: First evaluation of children by UW
- Spring 2012: Follow up of evaluation of children by UW
- July 2012: Plan for inclusion of before- and afterschool in YoungStar is released
- July 2012: Before- and afterschool programs are included in YoungStar
- January 2014: External evaluation by UW results
- January 2015: Integration of YoungStar data into Department of Public Instruction Longitudinal Data Study